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INFO RUEHKA/AMEMBASSY DHAKA PRIORITY 0950  
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RUEHKT/AMEMBASSY KATHMANDU PRIORITY 6111  
RUEHLO/AMEMBASSY LONDON PRIORITY 4439  
RUEHNE/AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI PRIORITY 2097  
RUEHNY/AMEMBASSY OSLO PRIORITY 4415  
RUEHKO/AMEMBASSY TOKYO PRIORITY 3515  
RUEHCG/AMCONSUL CHENNAI PRIORITY 8547  
RUEHBI/AMCONSUL MUMBAI PRIORITY 5992  
RUEHON/AMCONSUL TORONTO PRIORITY 0685  
RUEHGV/USMISSION GENEVA PRIORITY 2818  
RHHMUNA/HQ USPACOM HONOLULU HI PRIORITY  
RHEFDIA/DIA WASHINGTON DC PRIORITY  
RHEHAAA/NATIONAL SECURITY COUNCIL WASHINGTON DC PRIORITY  
RUEHBS/USEU BRUSSELS PRIORITY

C O N F I D E N T I A L COLOMBO 000571

SIPDIS

DEPARTMENT FOR SCA/INS

E.O. 12958: DECL: 06/11/2018

TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [PTER](#) [PHUM](#) [MOPS](#) [CE](#)

SUBJECT: SRI LANKA: TWO PROVINCIAL COUNCILS DISSOLVED;  
OPPOSITION PLANS LEGAL ACTION

Classified By: Charge d'Affaires James R. Moore, for reasons 1.4(b,d).

11. (U) At midnight on June 10, the government dissolved the Sabaragamuwa and North Central Provincial Councils. Both councils' terms were scheduled to end in August 2009. North Central Chief Minister (CM) Bertie Premalal Dissanayake and Sabaragamuwa Chief Minister Mahipala Herath confirmed that they gave consent to the provincial governors to dissolve the councils. Local media reported that the government decided to dissolve the two councils after the CMs and some provincial members of parliament met with President Rajapaksa and reported that they were unable to pass legislation without a ruling party majority. In North Central Province, the ruling UPFA had 14 members, the UNP had 10 members, the JVP had 8 members and the SLMC had one member. In Sabaragamuwa Province, the ruling UPFA had 18 members, the UNP had 15 members, the JVP has 10 members, and the CWC had 1 member. According to the 13th Amendment, new nominations are due to the election commission between 14 and 21 days after the dissolution and the elections should be held within five to eight weeks after nominations are received.

12. (U) The UNP and JVP have strongly objected to the dissolution, claiming it was unconstitutional. UNP Provincial Affairs Committee Chairman and Anuradhapura district MP P. Harrison said the UNP and JVP members of North Central Provincial Council gave affidavits to the Governor requesting him not to dissolve the council. He said the Governor can only dissolve the council if the government has a majority. (Note: The President may also dissolve a provincial council in the case of an administrative "failure," including the inability to pass legislation, a provision the GSL may use to defend its actions.) The UNP has said it will seek court intervention to obtain a stay order against the decision. The JVP announced on June 11 that it will also take legal action against the government's decision. JVP Information Secretary Vijithe Herath said the unnecessary provincial elections will burden the country's economy.

13. (C) COMMENT: The government apparently wants to build on its win in the East, in part to further undermine the opposition, and in part to create a diversion from Sri Lanka's accelerating inflation and slow progress on the

military front in the North. The government clearly sidestepped the constitution by dissolving the councils without a majority, but we expect that the courts are unlikely to side with the opposition and reverse the move. The UPFA will likely face a tougher battle in the North Central and Sabaragamuwa provinces than it did in the East, in part because they will not have the powerful armed group TMVP to partner with. We expect the GSL will stagger the two elections so as to focus its full resources on each province.

MOORE